Vol. VI. Numb. 34

THE OBSERVATOR.

The Country-man *full of Thoughts. Of thinking on private and publick Affairs. Of a future State. The Advantage of Thinking to our Selves and Posterity. The Reasons why the* Observator *still calls himself an* English-*man. A* Deceptio Visus *at Sea.*

From Wednesday, June 25. to Saturday, June 28. 1707.

Obs. WELL, honest *Country-man*, thou look'st somewhat better; are all the Clouds dispers'd and gone?

Country-m. Fronti nulla Fides: The Countenance of a Man is as deceitful as his Heart. I have the same Cause for my Melancholy; I have only chang'd the Scene; and from thinking of Publick Affairs, I have run my self into a Labyrinth of Thought. I find it avails nothing to think for the Publick, had a Man the Penetration of *Argus*; and he's most happy, that is the least capable of Thinking: For what is Thought, but bringing remote Evils nearer to our View? And that is bringing them Home before their Time, which would come of themselves. In short, it is making our selves uneasy, when we need not be so.

Obs. The rational Faculty in Man, and the thinking Faculty, are the same, for one cannot be without the other: And this is what makes us differ from Beasts. If we don't think aright, it is our own Fault; but to think honestly for the Good of the Common-Wealth, is not only a Duty, but a Pleasure.

Foresight, or thinking on Things to come, is most beneficial; and though it may disturb the Mind, by presenting to present View, future evil Effects, which must be the necessary Consequences of present Management; yet it helps to palliate and allay the Perturbations of the Mind, receiv'd from this future hideous View of Things, by presenting also the future happy Effects of good Management.

As for Example. My *Country-man* is very cloudy from a Foresight of our present Posture of Affairs in *Flanders* and *Germany*; nothing will serve him but a fighting Story, which he can't get: What of all this? Does not the Posture of Affairs in *Italy*, the Designs of Prince *Eugene* and the Duke of *Savoy*, afford us a pleasing Prospect of Success, far beyond what we could expect elsewhere?

And, *Roger*, you forget, that these black Thoughts proceed from a black Devil, from a *Leviathan*, who is a perpetual Disturber of the Waters. Why should a Man think altogether on his Miseries, and not at all on his Happiness? This is the Frailty of human Nature, to think more of the good Things we want, than of the Mercies we are possess'd of. There is no Man living, but receives more from the Hand of Providence, than he deserves; but 'tis the Pride inseparable from human Nature, that makes us set too great a Value upon our selves, and think that God Almighty is always in our Debt.

From private Instances, we will come to publick Considerations, and see if our Circumstances are as bad as some honest Men fear, and all evil Men wish.

Perhaps the Machine of War does not move so regularly as we desire or expect, but it is not broken: When Artists are employ'd, it may be mended; and Madam *Necessity*, when she draws the Curtain, will present to our View abundance of 'em, that are now bury'd in Obscurity, from the Service of our dear Country.

'Tis our Misfortune, that those who ought to think most, think nothing; and that those who need not think, think most. I speak this in Relation to the Publick; for every Man in his private Capacity, has Room enough for Thought and Animadversion.

And now, *Roger*, I tell you what I think; tho' Things Abroad have not gone as well as we could wish; that keeping the War from Home, is the greatest Blessing, and well worth all our Cost and Charge.

Country-m. Aye, Master, if we could keep the Sea War from Home, and not suffer the *French* Privateers to domineer in the *British* Seas.

Obs. That will be done too, when the great Lady *Necessity* shall show us what we want in order to that End.

But, *Roger*, to add to the former: Is it not a great Mercy, amidst the Dearth of Money, and Decay of Trade, that we have such a Plenty; that Heaven affords us Provisions in such an abundant Manner, that the young Men never knew the like, and the old Men can't produce parallel Instances?

Country-m. That's one Thing confounds me. I don't know how to reconcile Poverty and Plenty; can two Contraries subsist at the same Time? Never was the Nation poorer, (I speak of the common People, and not the Place-Officers) and yet this Plenty, you say, makes us rich.

Obs. I don't say so. Poverty and Plenty may subsist at the same Time. A rich Man can't be a poor Man, nor a poor Man can't be a rich Man, at the same Time; but a poor Man may live in Plenty; that is, the little Money he has to expend, will bring more into the Powdering Tub and Cupboard for a small Sum, than at other Times for a much greater: And this is a great Mercy, *Roger*, the Poor find it so.

Thoughtfulness for the future, is what is our Duty in all Respects, both in Relation to this, and a future State, both in Spirituals and Temporals;

Temporals, but an over ſollicitous Care about the Things of this Life, is burdenſome and fooliſh. We vex our Selves about the Event of Things, about what may happen, which is not in our Power to prevent. To provide for our Families, is our certain Duty; but to make our Selues uneaſy about it, is our Folly: A Folly not to be accounted for. If we heap up Riches for our Children, we know not how 'twill be improv'd after we are dead and gone; what our Heirs will prove, as *Solomon* ſays, whether a wiſe Man, or a Fool. They may come to Honour, and we ſhall not know it; they may be brought low, and we ſhall not perceive it of them: 'Tis all one to us in a future State.

Next to our future State, the Liberties of our Country, the free Birth-rights of *Engliſh*-men, and the common Good, is our great Concern, and ſhould be the chief Object of our Thoughts. But even here our Thoughts and Concern for the publick Good, muſt be regulated and order'd according to the Rules of Reaſon.

We can think to little Purpoſe for Poſterity, if we do not act for their Good. To preſerve our Liberties entire to our Children, is to preſerve it to our Selves, with the ſame Advantages as our Anceſtors left it to us. Theſe valuable Priviledges deſcend to Poſterity by a natural Entail, and cannot be reſcinded: A Plea and Claim may be brought in the Courts of Reaſon and Nature, by our Children, for the Recovery of their native Freedoms, notwithſtanding we have made an actual Surrender of them; for in this Caſe, we have given what was none of our own to give, but was put into our Poſſeſſion to *uſe*, not to deſtroy or waſte, but like good Patriots, to improve for the Good of Poſterity. And here is the beſt Improvement for Thought.

I need not ſpeak with this Vehemency to my *Countryman*; we have talk'd this over and over, and have employ'd our Thoughts about it; it has been our great Concern; but when we have talk'd to our fellow Subjects and Natives, who have we talk'd to? Not to deaf Adders, that have no Ears; not to Beetles, that can't ſee; but to Things that have human Shape, that have Eyes, but won't ſee, that have Ears, but won't hear; to an unthoughtful Lethargick Age, that can be awaken'd only by the of Sound the laſt Trumpet.

It is the Caſe of the Enemies of our Liberty, to put out the Eyes of one that will ſee for the Good of his Country, eſpecially one like the *Obſervator*, that endeavours to open other Peoples Eyes, as well as his own. Yet, he believes it his Duty to continue firm to the Intereſt of his Country, were 100 Ruffians at his Door, as not long ſince there were ſix actually engag'd to take away his Life.

'Tis dangerous, *Roger*, to think for the Good of our Country; but did not ſome think and ſpeak, Poſterity would not know what were the valuable Priviledges of *Engliſh*-men. Would they think, that *Nemo perdet Patriam*, was ever the Birth-Right of an *Engliſh*-man, when our Chronicles ſhall tell 'em, that our Armies were recruited with Freemen forc'd from their Country? And that the horrid Abuſes of trepanning Men into the Service, was but the Jeſt and Rediculе of our Courtiers on their Stage at the Play-houſe: As to their Infamy, it is often ſeen and heard in that ſcandalous Play, call'd, *The Recruiting Officer*. D'ye hear me, *Engliſh*-men?

Country-m. Maſter, why *Engliſh*-man? Why *Engliſh*-man, at every Word? Here is a Letter reprehends you upon that Account, and ſays you are a *Britain* ever ſince the UNION.

Obſ. I am content to have the ſame Title with the reſt of the People; but ſince a certain famous Author ſays, that the *Union* was the End of our Conſtitution, I will continue to be an *Engliſh*-man, 'till that Time this Matter is adjuſted; and if it be given againſt me, I will continue to be an *Engliſh*-man ſtill, for I never will be a Slave; which I muſt be, if I acknowledge our Conſtitution to be at an End. And, I thank God, I don't find, by the *Under-Spur-Leathers* Diſcourſe, (for I never read Union-Act, or Union-Articles) that there is any Law againſt my calling my ſelf an *Engliſh*-man; and I can aſſure thee, *Roger*, and I hope Mankind will believe it of me, that I will never ſell my Birth-right for a *Meſs* of *Broth*, or a *Meal* of *Claret*.

I know very well what other Topicks the *Spur-Leathers* are upon: I ſhall take 'em upon the ſhort Turn, before they come to their Journey's End; but I now caution all honeſt Men to beware of 'em.

Country-m. Maſter, the laſt Time we met, you told us a comical Story of Capt. *Dampier*'s fighting a Monkey at Sea; other People, Greater than he, are guilty of making Miſtakes on the Water.

Obſ. As how, *Roger*?

Country-m. Here 'tis on your *Portſmouth* Letter. The ——

Obſ. Hold, *Roger*, don't be too particular.

Country-m. Well, we won't then; but 'tis thus: Some Ships, the —— (I ſhall blunder out by and by) were going ſomewhere to Sea, with a fair Wind, and on Saturday Morning ſaw two Sail ſtanding in from the *Southward*, one of which had her Top-Gallant Sheets flying, and firing of Guns, which is the uſual Signal, it ſeems, of ſeeing the Enemy's Fleet. When they came up with the —— (hold, I had almoſt forgot) they ſaid they ſaw 17 *French* Men of War, upon which they all came back into Harbour, and ſoon afterwards the 17 *French* Men were metamorpho'd into 16 Sail of outward bound and coaſting Ships, under Convoy of two of our Men of War.

Obſ. Well, and what of all this?

Country-m. Nay, I don't know, but that People at Sea may be miſtaken, as well as People at Land. Shall I read your Letter out, and then give your Judgment upon it?

Obſ. No, *Roger*, don't, tho' we are not among the Informers at *Hampſtead*.

Country-m. Why, at this Rate, Maſter, we elevate and ſurprize the People, and all comes to Nothing.

Obſ. All is not to be ſpoken at all Times.

Country-m. Will you put down the Letters I ſhall read you the next Time we meet?

Obſ. I can't tell that neither, 'tis according as I ſhall like 'em.

Country-m. I never knew you ſo cruſty before. —— Here, *Joan*, light a Candle, and put Maſter *Obſervator* to Bed. —— I'll ſtay no longer with you.

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‡‡‡ The *Title*, *Preface*, and *Index* to the Fifth Volume of the *Obſervator*, are to be had at *B. Bragge*'s, at the *Raven* in *Pater-Noſter-Row*.

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